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STRONG poet of the sleepless gods that dwell
As far above the stars as we beneath,
Thy melody, disdaining the soft sheath
Of dainty modern music, snaps the spell,
And heedless of old forms and fettered plan,
Clothes itself carelessly in rough free words,
And strikes with giant's hand the inner chords
That vibrate in the strong and healthful man!

What if our brothers in an age to be,
Emerging from the Titan war of Thought,
Seize hollow Custom, and with one keen blow
Strike off her seven heads, and having smote,
Pass on, and with their larger veins aglow
With new-found vigour, mould themselves to thee!

A. A.

HAVE we not hailed them great who fought for the truth when it was not,
Strong in the rapture of hope, knowing by faith it should be,
Barriers down, ways clear; and shall we not hail you, brother,
True to the high faith of freedom, 'midst of the shame of the free—
After the truth's own treason, hoping against hope's confusion, teaching the weary of light and the hope-sick to see.

Laurels we gave them freely, who, when their kindred reviled them,
Fronted the scorn of the world with a scorn overwhelming its own:
Shall we not laurel the leader, who, when his brothers denied him,
Loving them never the less, stayed him not ev'n to condone;
Glad of their virtue still, triumphing not in their vileness, triumphing only to think they should walk in the way he had shown!

Better forgiveness serene as the sun than the bolt of the storm-god:
Better the large faith of love than the Coriolanian cry:
Better the eye still bright with the dream of a glorious distance
Than the sad grey world of the sage scanning his race from on high;
Better the pride of the comrade, great in his vision of greatness, than the pride of the sage or the scorner, letting his kind pass by.

WALT WHITMAN.

AN ancient and authoritative saw has formulated for us a peculiar social tendency which, though ·esumably recognised for eighteen hundred years ıck, has not, even in this era of explanation and ıeory, been systematically accounted for. It is ɛemplified in the common disposition to-day in ngland to see the greatest living American author in ıe whom the literary world of the States continues to eat somewhat as an outer barbarian. American riters have not yet ceased to speak with a half-dignant, half-scornful astonishment of the singular preciation British readers and critics accord to pro-cts of American literature which are thought little in the land of their birth. And yet the law of the io of a prophet's popularity has been illustrated rallel-wise in the States, the reading public there :quently taking a British writer into favour long fore he has won acceptance at home. Reversing the ırase of Hamlet, one might suggest that there is ımething natural in this, if philosophy could but find out. That Carlyle should have found a wide hearing America earlier than in England, might perhaps be ɛplained plausibly by crediting the people of the ɔung Republic with the more ready ear for unconven-

tional speech; but how on that theory account for the tabooing of Whitman in the States in the teeth of the tribute of that Emerson who had stood sponsor for Carlyle? Perhaps 'twere to consider too curiously for literary edification to consider so. To know why Whitman has been so much more kindly received in England than in the States would probably be to have a true perception of his value and importance, his strength and his weakness; but to attain such an explanation seems much more difficult than to weigh his message and his method on their merits. To know why we have ourselves received him, however, is a step towards a solution; and it is meet that so much should be ascertained.

It is a natural as well as a precedented course to begin by asking what we went out to see when we met the stranger; but how shall it be told? At the outset we are met by the sharp American demand to know why we should expect a peculiar literary product from a section of our own race which speaks our speech, and reads our classics, in a climate not greatly different from our own. The position is delicate. Are we to premise that our kin beyond seas are further-seeing than we; or to hint the crude doctrine that we look for large ideas from the dwellers in a large land, novel thoughts from those who breathe the air of the New World? Crude or clumsy if the process of reasoning be, there the fact stands that English readers had long been demanding from the United States a new and autochthonic poetical product; and it can hardly be but that the demand arose from a sense of distinction and high birthright attaching to the young nation whose giant-hood was so early surmised. Surely the attitude of expectation had its touching side, though we may not

find it stand rational question. The instinctive faith in the boundless possibilities opened up by this new avatar of democracy is in unison with the spirit of Whitman's own poetry; and it was so far natural—though our first perplexity remains—that those who looked wistfully or curiously across the Atlantic for a new song, should have affinities for the American man who came forward to proclaim that new songs must be sung, and essayed to begin.

Still, we are a perverse generation. No less loud than our demand for an American poetry have been our protests against Americanism in speech and manners; and when there appears in America a poet who is obtrusively, and must for certain be genuinely, American, were it only because he is clearly nothing else, we greet him with an urbanity and an enthusiasm that he cannot evoke in his own habitat. Even were there no incredulous Americans to challenge us we might well ask ourselves whether our attachment has not been too unadvised, too sudden.

It may reasonably be conceded, at the outset, that there is a tolerably strong presumption against the man who in these days comes forward both to prescribe the task of modern poetry and to do it. True, there has arisen a demand such as was never formulated before, that the age shall produce its special poet; and it would seem necessary that he who shall sing the age should know what he is about; as the poet of Paradise is presumed to have had his "great argument" present to his consciousness from the first. But the doctrine that ages have their poets is only one outcome of a spirit of criticism peculiar to this century, and the same spirit is somewhat positive about the essence of poetry being spontaneity. Lord Tennyson

has told us that he "does but sing because he must;" Mr. Browning has indicated a similar conception; and the general critical attitude towards Wordsworth does not promise good fortune to the man whose poetry is the systematic expression of a literary theory. Mr. Arnold has given us his prefaces, but we feel them to be critical after-thoughts. Milton had his idea of what were the essential qualities of poetry, but his choice of an epic theme was almost accidental; Wordsworth alone had a theory of his work which involved an estimate of the themes and methods of his contemporaries, and a defined principle in the choice of his own; and Wordsworth seems to have been least successful just where he was most circumspect, most distinctly conscious of fulfilling his mission. The hostile presumption is obtrusive. When before did a great poet say to himself, "My age wants a special kind of poetry. Nobody else is producing it, and I must"? Is not the very conception suggestive of the doomed prosaist who labours to turn an idea into rhyme, instead of finding, poet-wise, his thought run to song;—of Ben Jonson writing his tirades in prose and then blank-versifying them?

And yet, on after-thought it will be found that nothing more decisively identifies Whitman with his age and its literature than this backbone of critical and didactic purpose in his work. It is our century that has condemned the novel with a purpose; but it was only the other day a practised craftswoman declared with general acceptance that, however that might be, the novel without a purpose was something worse—a sufficiently compendious form of the argument that what is wanted is really the skill to effect the purpose in the reader's despite, instead of simply dunning him

a bald appeal. The most esteemed and the most ·ious work of the day are alike the outcome of a onscious and systematised philosophy; George and M. Zola alike have "un but;" even Mr. 'ning is not content to be regarded as psycholo- ; for psychology's sake; and if the mind which ed to know what was proved by Paradise Lost t with equal propriety put its question with ·d to the poetry of this generation, at least, with rensic turn, it could not miss seeing that the poets rally wanted to prove something. In short, we rought up against the discovery that all poetry is ism of life, and must be content with demanding the criticism shall take a less formidably crude e than an Essay on Man.

) poet is more explicit about his creed and ose than Whitman; perhaps none has such an all- ·bing creed and purpose to proclaim; and when is once perceived the doubt about his poetic ty is already half-disposed of. If there was a in Carlyle's favourite citation from Milton—that who would write a heroic poem must make his ı heroic poem"—it is surely still truer that he would sing democracy must be the most robust ıcrat; and Whitman is the very democrat of ice as well as of faith and philosophy.

half-ratiocinative, half-emotional attachment to ause of free self-government is one of the com- st states of mind in these days; but after all that een said in humanitarian literature it is doubtful ıer a cordial feeling of human brotherhood has y come to be the normal one for the majority. character is made to observe in a recent novel, man may be a democrat without being a demo-

phile." Our love for the general run of our fellow-creatures remains distinctly theoretical: our friendships are about as purely expressive of our private idiosyncracies, as entirely matter of individual leaning, as were those of our forefathers who believed in the divine right of kings; indeed, we tend to be much less effusive in our attachments than they, greatly toning down the language of friendship without being at all more addicted to all-round camaraderie. Our democratic poetry has mostly run to generalities. But Whitman is in nothing more remarkable than in the exaltation, the fervour, with which he sings of love between comrades. It is practically, as he sounds it, a new note in modern poetry; and were it for nothing else he might well be forgiven on the strength of his elevation of feeling in this regard, for any seeming lack of it in other connections. His faculty of brotherly love is one of his most potent inspirations. Lincoln's homely qualities live in the memory of good democrats who feel the transfiguring effect of his death; but Whitman, while never once alluding to the assassin, sings passionately of the dead president as of a beloved friend, "the wisest, sweetest soul" of his generation. His whole nature tends to rapturous expression: in very truth he cannot choose but express himself as he does. From his first line he is not only the vowed singer of democracy and the dear love of comrades, but the self-poised, self-centred, self-possessed democratic unit; a manifestation of the force which *is* democracy; the typical self-asserting individual.

His leading poem begins like the Fifth Symphony, as no song ever began before, with a salvo of self-proclamation which is at the same time, and *ex facto*, the knock of fate. "I have found the law of my poems,"

he announces in a late prose fragment; and indeed he points to it truly enough. The paragraph should be read as it stands, as illustrating at once his penetration and his literary manner, or lack of manner.

"AN EGOTISTICAL 'FIND.'

"'I have found the law of my own poems' was the unspoken but more-and-more decided feeling that came to me as I pass'd, hour after hour, amid all this grim, yet joyous elemental abandon—this plenitude of material, entire absence of art, untrammel'd play of primitive nature—the chasm, the gorge, the crystal mountain stream, repeated scores, hundreds of miles—the broad handling and absolute uncrampedness—the fantastic forms, bathed in transparent browns, faint reds and greys, towering sometimes a thousand, sometimes two or three thousand feet high—at their tops now and then huge masses pois'd, and mixing with the clouds, with only their outlines, hazed in misty lilac, visible. ('In nature's grandest shows,' says an old Dutch writer, an ecclesiastic, 'amid the ocean's depth, if so might be, or countless worlds rolling above at night, a man thinks of them, weighs all, not for themselves or the abstract, but with reference to his own personality, and how they may affect or colour his destinies.')"

The major part of the explanation perhaps lies in the suffixed quotation; the minor in Whitman's own characteristically rambling and formless sentence. Whitman sings life, history, politics as he does because he is the man he is, absolutely self-confident, sanguine, candid, loving, tolerant and eupeptic; yet self-esteeming, vigorously egotistic, and exclusive by fits. All life for him relates itself to his impulses; his is the naïf popular theism of the day which finds the universe made for man, and the land for the race. Again, he has, as he points out, that very sameness in caprice which marks primitively self-assertive and genuine natures, as that of Carlyle, of whom Emerson remarked that he said the same thing day after day, week after

week, and year after year. And like the half-cultured continent he is profuse, straggling, miscellaneous. In another passage he has expressed his sense of the significance of his books more explicitly. Probably, he says, "the whole of these varied songs, and all of my writings, both volumes, only ring changes in some sort, on the ejaculation, How vast, how eligible, how joyful, how real is a Human Being, himself or herself."

Just, however, as he is the most actual democrat, in his independence and his brotherliness, so is Whitman the most expert scholar of democracy. Let any one who has gone through his prose say whether any writer has looked more piercingly and patiently into all the aspects of the subject, fair and foul; accumulated more facts and ideas; or placed any in a greater variety of lights. In this department—philosophy apart—no man can teach him anything. Optimism is the *raison d'être* of his work as a whole, and the ground tone of his personality, but he has been in the deeps, and at least felt pessimistic pangs in ebb-tide moods. Only after having seen all round his theme, only after having thought over it in all weathers and all companies, in sunlight and moonlight, in ecstasy and in despondency, in complacent ease, and in grey and dreary hours of sorrow, could he have reached his matchless certitude of belief. It is difficult to overrate the strength of conviction and confidence of power and knowledge a man must have to come forward as did Whitman, and sound his "Let there be light" across what he regards as a world-wide chaos of thoughts effete and transitory. According to his own account he, the strolling compositor and journalist, found the entire literature of his country (he seems even to have included Emerson, on which head more anon)

absolutely and unpardonably unworthy of America's present greatness and future destinies. This was no random outburst of an hour of elevation; the idea has become part of his judgment on American life, and has been more constantly present to him the older he has grown. Take some of his later expressions of it.

"When I pass to and fro, different latitudes, different seasons, beholding the crowds of the great cities, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, New Orleans, Baltimore—when I mix with these swarms, alert, turbulent, good-natured, independent citizens, mechanics, clerks, young persons —at the idea of this mass of men, so fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a singular awe falls upon me. I feel, with dejection and amazement, that among our geniuses and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, or created a single image-making work that could be called for them, or absorbed the central spirit of the idiosyncracies which are theirs, and which thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpressed. . . .

"Of workers of a certain sort we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learned, all complacent. But, touched by the national test, or tried by the standards of democratic personality, they wither to ashes. I say I have not seen a single writer, artist, lecturer, or what not, that has confronted the voiceless but ever erect and active, pervading, underlying will and typic aspiration of the land in a spirit kindred to itself. Do you call those genteel little creatures American poets? Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work, American art, American drama, taste, verse? I think I hear echoed as from some mountain-top afar in the west, the scornful laugh of the Genius of These States."

Democratic Vistas.

At times the contemptuous judgment kindles into epigram, as here:

"What is the reason, our time, our lands, (*sic*) that we see no fresh local courage, sanity of our own—the Mississippi stalwart western men, real mental and physical facts, southerners, etc., in

the body of our literature? especially the poetic part of it. But always, instead, a parcel of dandies and ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad, who flood us with their thin sentiment of parlors, parasols, piano-songs, tinkling rhymes, the five hundredth importation, or whimpering and crying about something, chasing one aborted conceit after another, and for ever occupied in dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women."—*Democratic Vistas.*

And here:

"Of course, by our plentiful verse-writers there is plenty of service perform'd of a kind. Nor need we go far for a tally. We see, in every polite circle, a class of accomplished good-natured persons, ('society,' in fact, could not get on without them), fully eligible for certain problems, times, and duties—to mix egg-nog, to mend the broken spectacles, to decide whether the stew'd eels shall precede the sherry or the sherry the stew'd eels, to eke out Mrs. A. B's parlor-tableaux with monk, Jew, lover, Puck, Prospero, Caliban, or what not, and to generally contribute and gracefully adapt their flexibilities and talents, in those ranges, to the world's service. But for real crises, great needs and pulls, moral or physical, they might as well have never been born. . . . I think I haven't seen a new published, healthy, bracing, simple lyric in ten years. Not long ago, there were verses in each of the three fresh monthlies from leading authors, and in every one the whole central *motif* (perfectly serious) was the melancholiness of a marriageable young woman who didn't get a rich husband, but a poor one!"

Poetry to-day in America.

Others than the generality of American littérateurs might well feel hurt at such utterances. This is the very fanaticism of democracy, the intolerant manifesto of the enthusiast who will allow no worthiness to any point of view but his own, and the intolerance, be it noticed, goes counter to the spirit of democracy even as Whitman has expounded it. Why single out the poets to drill and dogmatise over? If everywhere free individual development is the keynote of republican life, why contemn the writer who says what is in him just as the swarms of independent citizens do their business, make

their little inventions, vote for their candidate, and choose their churches and their clothes? It is, of course, sheer extravagance from any calmly critical standpoint to sum up American writers in such terms as those above quoted. Any one but the seer of democracy in a prophetic frenzy will gratefully acknowledge as contributions to the choice literature of the world the deep and delicate studies of Hawthorne, the singular products of the abnormal intellect of Poe, and the bright, bold inspiration and catholic enthusiasm of Emerson—surely a worthy son of democracy—not to mention the popular singers who have surely fulfilled one of Whitman's own tests, and helped many a human soul. Hawthorne, Poe, Emerson, and Longfellow, each worked out his mission, as Whitman desires every man should do; and even Poe, be it noted, protested against the acceptance given to anti-democratic European literature in America. But the prophet of democracy, being what he is, must needs be didactically inconsistent in order to be consistently prophetic. For Whitman to justify his intolerance of the natural bias of his literary countrymen, would probably be to land himself in the toils of fatalist metaphysics, and his admirers can scarcely hope to fare better. But the practical explanation is pretty clear. Either Whitman, being a pioneer and something of an arrogant believer in himself, has really not had the leisure or the care to study properly the literature of his own country, or, being the bearer and devoted prophet of the great ideas of democracy, he lacks the faculty to appreciate the product of those who, working like himself in the literary guild, occupy themselves discursively, and leave the great ideas more or less to shift for themselves. Or be it that the alternatives are correlative views of

Whitman's function and personality—in any case the conclusion will be found to lend itself to an estimate of his work from the literary standpoint.

Venturing on a domain of metaphor always to be trodden with circumspection, let us say that when the Zeitgeist wants to strike an important blow he makes a heavy hammer. It might seem that the self-consciousness which, involving an incapacity for what is ordinarily considered natural development, is half the time contemplating itself and missing the expansion it worships—that this is an abortive growth. But just such an absorption in one idea appears to be the necessary condition of the poet of democracy—just such a fanaticism seems needed to smite the people into that thrill of intelligent belief in their own high destiny which will make them progress towards it. The leader who would stimulate all can share the relaxations of none: he is fain to resent that those who seem capable of stimulating should not be doing so with him; just as, on the other hand, the disciplined thinker who believes in democracy and progress would fain that the poet had arrived at a fuller system of thought—that Whitman had been Comte. The one thing quite clear about the poetic function is that the poet must sing a passion, his own or another's, and the deeper the passion sung—relatively to the reader's sympathy—the more potent the poetry. Whitman's passion, then, is democracy, and it is none the less a passion because it is a formulated creed. Poetry must needs acquire the self-conscious quality which more and more colours all thought as evolution goes on; progress in life—upward progress—being but progress in consciousness. Poetry can no longer be an idea which does not know where it came from, and ends with its expression.

The essential thing is that the singer of democracy shall be full charged with his theme; and that an idea which feeds on optimism and confidence shall be carried with a confidence that no adversity will dash. And how Whitman's confidence rays out from his first page! Other poets have sung democracy in moments of expansion, or when goaded by the sight of war and depression: he alone ecstatically points a prosperous demos to new heights of ideal life.

"A live nation," he proclaims in his first preface, "can always cut a deep mark, and can have the best authority the cheapest, namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states, and of present action and grandeur, and of the subjects of poets. As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery, and what has transpired since in North and South America, were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleep-walking of the middle ages!"

He is just as confident in his poetic mission as in his message. "Of all nations," he declares, "the United States, with veins full of poetical stuff, most need poets, and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric, or fail of their sanity. . . . He is the arbiter of the diverse, and he is the key. He supplies what wants supplying, and checks what wants checking. It

peace is the routine, out of him speaks the spirit of peace. . . . In war he is the most deadly force of the war. . . . High up out of reach he stands, turning a concentrated light. . . . The time straying towards infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith. . . . His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer; he is judgment. He judges not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling round a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the most faith."

Some of the sentences in this latter passage, brilliantly enforced though they are by the others, are almost enough to prove, what full knowledge of his books absolutely establishes, that Whitman has almost no humour. The circumstance is peculiarly noteworthy. It is universally agreed that humour consists in the perception of the incongruous; and it has seemed natural that among the most restless population in the world, they possessing the most complex civilisation, the perception should be most highly educated. But Whitman is too enormously in earnest, too intensely faithful, to laugh. Carlyle, let it be noted, is the one really earnest moralist who has indulged much in humour, and Carlyle's humour grew out of his profound unfaith in humanity. Whitman's faith is as strong as Carlyle's scepticism; and though he may meet one of Carlyle's favourite moral tests by a capacity to laugh broadly at the broadly and simply laughable, he is never heartily humorous in his writing. The humorous propensities of his countrymen get little recognition from him; when he is in a minatory mood —he frequently is in his later prose—he sees in the American habit of jesting on all things one of the unhealthy aspects of things democratic. That this is no accidental trait in Whitman is suggested by observa-

ɔn of its appearance in the later utterances of George liot, who had in her time smiled—lovingly enough ɔ doubt—over most of the odd aspects of humanity, ɹt who at length shrank from the aggressive tendencies ɜveloped by the humorous spirit. Whether the truth ɜs in that view or in Mr. Traill's subtly presented ggestion* that humour is the true antidote to the ntents of Pandora's box, is a question of somewhat ep import, which will be found involved in our ɟuiry at another point. It may be doubted, however, ɪether Whitman's lack of humour is not a weakness him as a propagandist, relatively to the average ellect of his time. Which of us can remain resolutely ɪve over the intimation that, among other things, : "picturesque looseness of carriage" of the American nmon people, and "the president's taking off his : to them, not they to him," are "unrhymed poetry"? .e thing is said in all good faith, and a momentary npathy is possible, though it is not clear why the present should take off his hat to his fellow-citizens save win their votes; but the smile will break through. Mr. Meredith makes a character observe that ɪicism is intellectual dandyism. Perhaps the dictum :ruer than its acute author really believed. Take it ɪt cynicism is humour overdone, and we arrive at a ɪception of humour as the soul's clothing for its ɜedness, acutely experienced after modern indulgence the fruit of the tree of knowlege of good and evil. may be that the adoption of this is demonstrably an ɜtional act; but to demonstrate that a joke is an surdity is but to make the joker a present of another. ›gical progress, however, is possible on the underɪnding that he is a weak creature, and that a stronger

* *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1882.

may get on in vigorous nakedness. Such a son of Adam is Whitman. He positively does not need humour to protect him from his atmosphere, and he has no self-critical qualms about his appearance; being, indeed, by his enemies' account, far too naked to be shamed. See what an unflinching look he has taken at the seamy side of the life of the Republic.

"Once, before the war (Alas! I dare not say how many times the mood has come!) I, too, was filled with doubt and gloom. A foreigner, an acute and good man, had impressively said to me, that day—putting in form, indeed, my own observations: 'I have travelled much in the United States, and watched their politicians, and listened to the speeches of the candidates, and read the journals, and gone into the public-houses, and heard the unguarded talk of men. And I have found your vaunted America honeycombed from top to toe with infidelism, even to itself and its own programme. I have marked the brazen hell-faces of secession and slavery gazing defiantly from all the windows and doorways. I have everywhere found, primarily, thieves and scalliwags arranging the nominations to offices, and sometimes filling the offices themselves. I have found the North just as full of bad stuff as the South. Of the holders of public office in the nation, or in the States, or their municipalities, I have found that not one in a hundred has been chosen by any spontaneous selection of the outsiders, the people, but all have been nominated and put through by little or large caucuses of the politicians, and have got in by corrupt rings and electioneering, not capacity or desert. I have noticed how the millions of sturdy farmers and mechanics are thus the helpless supple-jacks of comparatively few politicians. And I have noticed more and more the alarming spectacle of parties usurping the government, and openly and shamelessly wielding it for party purposes. Sad, serious, deep truths."—*Democratic Vistas.*

In a paper on "Origins of Attempted Secession," he presents what, without any thought of being piquant, he calls "a schedule or list" of one of the controlling "Democratic" nominating conventions of the Republic, as they existed "for a long time before, and inclusive

that which nominated Buchanan;" a catalogue and :ture which, with all its mordant emphasis, carries a rtain ludicrous suggestion of Falstaff's regiment, but ıich yet haunts the memory like a description from e *Inferno.* And in that paper he deliberately avows belief which might surprise even those Englishmen ıo sided with the South, the conviction, namely—and was formed with a wide and close knowledge of the ates—"that if at the opening of the contest the stract duality-question of slavery and quiet could have en submitted to a direct popular vote, as against ɛir opposite, they would have triumphantly carried ɛ day in a majority of the Northern States—in the 'ge cities, leading off with New York and Philadelphia, ' tremendous majorities. The events of '61 amazed 'erybody North and South, and burst all prophecies ıd calculations like bubbles. But even then, and ıring the whole war, the stern fact remains that (not nly did the North put it down, but) *the secession cause ıd numerically just as many sympathisers in the free s in the rebel States.*"

He can even be somewhat atrabiliar in his comments n what he sees about him—and then, as it happens, e professes a disposition to laugh.

"There is, to the humorous observer of American attempts at shion, according to the models of foreign courts and saloons, ıite a comic side—particularly visible at Washington city—a sort : high life below stairs business. As if any farce could be funnier, ır instance, than the scenes of the crowds, winter nights, meander-ıg around our presidents and their wives, cabinet officers, western r other senators, representatives, etc.; born of good labouring ıechanic, or farmer stock and antecedents, attempting those full-ress receptions, finesse of parlors, foreign ceremonies, etiquettes, c."

This comes in a note on "Society," after a passage

on "Boston, with its circles of social mummies, swathed in cerements harder than brass—its bloodless religion (Unitarianism), its complacent vanity of science and literature, lots of grammatical correctness, mere knowledge (always wearisome in itself)—its zealous abstractions, ghosts of reforms."

Mr. Ruskin never said anything worse of his fellow-citizens than this:

"Confess that everywhere, in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed, chignon'd, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood deceasing or deceased, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners, or rather lack of manners (considering the advantages enjoyed), probably the meanest to be seen in the world." "Of these rapidly sketched portraitures, hiatuses," he says in a footnote, "the two which seem to me most serious are, for one, the condition, absence, or perhaps the singular abeyance of moral, conscientious fibre all through American Society; and, for another, the appalling depletion of women in their powers of sane athletic maternity, their crowning attribute, and ever making the woman, in loftiest spheres, superior to the man."—*Democratic Vistas.*

But with all this in mind our arch-democrat bates ultimately no jot of heart or hope. Notwithstanding it all, "the morbid facts of American politics and society everywhere are but passing incidents and flanges of our unbounded impetus of growth—weeds, annuals, of the rank rich soil—not central, enduring, perennial things." "All the hitherto experience of the States, their first century, has been but preparation, adolescence." "Enough, that while the piled embroidered shoddy gaud and fraud spreads to the superficial eye, the hidden warp and weft are genuine, and will

wear for ever. Enough, in short, that the race, the land which could raise such as the late Rebellion could also put it down." "I know nothing grander, better exercise, better digestion, more positive proof of the past, the triumphant result of faith in human kind, than a well-contested American election." "During the Secession war I was with the armies, and saw the rank and file, North and South, and studied them for four years. I have never had the least doubt about the country in its essential future since."

There is no arguing down this elemental force of faith; and he must be well set on his feet who can stedfastly resist it, even with the prediction of Baron Jacobi in "Democracy" fresh in his ears. When Whitman reviews Carlyle on the latter's death, the democrat takes the superior position by sheer force of assured, tolerant serenity. No better, closer, deeper, more perspicaciously appreciative estimate of Carlyle has appeared than Whitman's in the "Specimen Days and Collect." Already he had allowed that there was value in "Shooting Niagara," in which Mr. Henry James, senior, could see but "puerile gabble;" and he now asks, "Who cares that he wrote about Dr. Francia, and 'Shooting Niagara,' and 'The Nigger Question'—and didn't at all admire our United States? I doubt if he ever thought or said half as bad words about us as we deserve." One would give something to have had Carlyle pass judgment on "Leaves of Grass," in acknowledgment of Emerson's present and criticism; but it would be still more interesting to know how he would have taken that imperturbable acceptance of his entire anti-democratic Jeremiad. To Whitman there is no sting in the fact that Carlyle and Hugo and Tennyson "cannot span the vast revolutionary arch

thrown by the United States over the centuries, fixed in the present, launched to the endless future." His vast faith can swallow up their unbelief. "Fortunately the gestation of our thirty-eight empires (and plenty more to come) proceeds on its course, on scales of area and velocity immense and absolute as the globe, and, like the globe itself, quite oblivious even of great poets and thinkers. But we can by no means afford to be oblivious of them."

In his eyes all things work together for the good of democracy. The Secession war he calls the Union war. "A great literature will yet arise out of the era of those four years, those scenes—era-compressing centuries of native passion, first-class pictures, tempests of life and death—an inexhaustible mine for the histories, drama, romance, and even philosophy, of peoples to come—indeed the verteber of poetry and art (of personal character, too), for all future America—far more grand, in my opinion, to the hands capable of it, than Homer's siege of Troy, or the French wars to Shakespere." He foresees for the States a superb civilisation; he pictures the details as Christian enthusiasts do the phenomena of the New Jerusalem. "A few years, and there will be an appropriate, native, grand opera, the lusty and wide-lipp'd offspring of Italian methods. Yet it will be no mere imitation, nor follow precedents, any more than nature follows precedents. Vast oval halls will be constructed, on acoustic principles, in cities, where companies of musicians will perform lyrical pieces, born to the people of these States; and the people will make perfect music a part of their lives." "Also, a great breed of orators will one day spread over the United States, and be continued." "Also, in a few years, there will be in the

cities of these States, immense museums, with suites of halls, containing samples and illustrations from all the peoples of the earth, old and new. In these halls, in the presence of these illustrations, the noblest savans will deliver lectures to thousands of young men and women on history, natural history, the sciences, etc." Such faith is scarce in Israel.

It forms a somewhat grotesque commentary on Whitman's enthusiastic accounts of the elements of greatness in American life, that the respectable, cultured, American population contrive to see in the man who talks thus nothing but a coarse propounder of loose notions on sexual morality.* Supposing there were no direct defence whatever for Whitman's offences against the convenances in "Leaves of Grass," the idea that his educated countrymen can with almost one accord make these offences outweigh his entire gospel is not easily to be grasped. A future age will assuredly see one of the sickliest of all the moral conditions of modern life in this collapse of the American nervous system before a mere defiance of one social law by the man who, of all his race, has most ardently set great ideals before republicans, and most austerely contemned their radical vices; who, above all, has wasted himself in most generous but most burdensome service to his kind. Any one with a clear vision of essentials in morals will be ready to pronounce that Whitman's loving and patient work in the hospitals through the years of the war is, with his books, sufficient attestation that he is of the salt of his people; and that whether or not all his propositions in sociology be tenable, it is simply absurd to pronounce him a force of evil. Among those who

* He was turned out of the Interior Department at Washington in 1865 by Mr. Harlan for writing "Leaves of Grass." See his article, "An Indian Bureau Reminiscence," in the English Magazine *To-day* for May 1884.

would excommunicate him, it is safe to say, there are few devoted enough to good works to incur paralysis in voluntary hospital labour. Mrs. Grundy never made a more characteristic exhibition than in her verdict on Whitman. It might have bred cynicism in its subject, and will scarcely fail to do so among his less optimistic appreciators.

Let us, however, close the door for a moment on Mrs. Grundy's respected face, and briefly hear in quiet the case against Whitman and his defence. Extenuating nothing, let us note that Emerson protested warmly against what he called the bad morals of "Leaves of Grass" as he praised the book's great qualities: and let us confess that one bright writer's dexterous account of the denounced passages as amounting to "mere Biblical plainness" is slightly deceptive. Whitman does more than talk plainly of what society objects to talk of in mixed circles. He is unmarried, and he has indicated views which may be assumed to identify him, so far as their distinctive tenet goes, with those who make light of the marriage tie—a party who, some years ago, seemed to be gaining ground in America, but of late have not been much heard of abroad. This, with perhaps one exception, is from the ordinary point of view the most serious charge which can be made against Whitman. On this head there is but little to say. Whitman has published "A Memorandum at a venture," in which, on Millet's text "All is proper to be expressed, provided only our aim is high enough," he argues for the view he has adhered to for twenty years, "that the sexual passion in itself, while normal and unperverted, is inherently legitimate, creditable, not necessarily an improper theme for poet, as confessedly not for scientist;" but he says nothing

on the marriage question. It is therefore to be presumed that he has not cared to burn his fingers further over a subject on which he sees opinion is almost universally intractable to innovating theories. That recognised, the subject may on the whole judiciously be left alone by his admirers, with the proviso, however, that no Philistine shall be allowed unchallenged to execrate Whitman, while Plato is treated with reverence. It is surely time that religious tolerance should be made to extend to admitting that a man may be a good citizen though he holds theories which, carried out, would work extensive changes in social relations. People profess to believe in evolution, yet treat every new speculation as less an error than a crime. At least let Whitman, his morals in other respects being granted irreproachable, receive from cultured men the tolerance with which they view the domestic transactions of Socrates and the social doctrines of Plato; seeing that to-day, as of old, Aristophanes is among the champions of propriety and use-and-wont. At least let us be above the imbecility exemplified in that moral American legislation which disfranchises the Mormon polygamist, and leaves undisturbed his neighbour who only keeps concubines. British and American society of to-day, with its greasy hypocrisies, can hardly pronounce the last word in such a matter. In point of fact, Whitman has never pressed counsel one way or another on his readers. Even had he speculated explicitly in this direction as in others, he might surely be listened to without shrieks of terror; but there is no reason to believe because of variation on his own part that he does not hold marriage a fundamental institution of the present era, any more than that he expects or desires a speedy attainment of socialism.

A fair-minded reader will more readily take sides against Whitman on the minor ground of his mere "Biblical plainness." Here he can now be heard in his defence, and it is impossible not to credit him with an entire superiority to that mere pruriency which so strangely goes unrebuked in many writers so long as they do but avoid directness, biblical or other.

Whitman had already challenged the reigning morality of his countrymen forcibly enough. "Observe," he says, in one of his 'general notes,' "that the most impudent slanders, low insults, etc. on the great revolutionary authors, leaders, poets, etc. of Europe have their origin and main circulation in certain circles here. The treatment of Victor Hugo living, and of Byron dead, are samples. Both deserving so well of America; and both persistently attempted to be soiled here by unclean birds, male and female." There is, perhaps, something of the wisdom of the serpent in this fashion of carrying the war into the enemy's country, refreshingly parodied of late in Mr. Swinburne's attacks on Carlyle, but no one can pronounce the "memorandum at a venture" other than the dignified deliverance of a high-minded man, who is honestly above that taste for the after-dinner erotic which he can righteously charge on perhaps the majority of his male contemporaries. Whitman's argument is that the real harm lies in the conventional shame to which he attributes "that human pathologic evil and morbidity which is, in my opinion, the keel and reason-why of every evil and morbidity." "Its scent," he adds, "as of something sneaking, furtive, and mephitic, seems to lingeringly pervade all modern literature, conversation, and manners."

Now, though it may not be apparent at first, the

conflict here between Whitman and those who gainsay him is really one between optimism and pessimism. Theism is essentially optimistic, and those who protest against Whitman's freedoms are usually theists; but it s not easy to see how they can philosophically justify it once their agreements with him and their dissent. t may be suspected that they seldom try. The ordinary optimist pronounces all things, sin apart, good n their place, but proceeds to snub certain of the nblamed tendencies and phenomena as little better han necessary evils. He cannot in fact get rid of the nheritance of pessimism which comes down with the Christian legend; he still hangs his head in sympathy vith Adam and Eve. Whitman comes about as near being a consistent optimist as any man well can, being not even put out by sin; and it will be difficult to show hat he is not within his rights in claiming that the notive force of the race shall be sung as heartily as he spring, or as motherhood and friendship. He can airly challenge the professing optimist to choose whether he will or will not renounce Schopenhauer; whether he will expressly repudiate the teaching that humanity is duped by the will-to-live, or give it colour by his attitude.

Emerson seems to have had no suspicion of any flaw n his case when he mixed reprobation of the indecorum of "Leaves of Grass," with eulogy of its wit and wisdom. Whitman gives a curiously interesting account of how, after they first became acquainted, he walked about with Emerson in Boston for two hours of a bright February day, discussing the proprieties.

"Emerson was then in his prime, keen, physically and morally magnetic, arm'd at every point, and when he chose wielding the emotional just as well as the intellectual. During those two hours

he was the talker and I the listener. It was an argument—statement, reconnoitring, review, attack, and pressing home (like an army corps in order, artillery, cavalry, and infantry), of all that could be said against that part (and a main part) in the construction of my poems 'Children of Adam.' More precious than gold to me that dissertation—it afforded me, ever after, this strange and paradoxical lesson; each point of E.'s statement was unanswerable, no judge's charge ever more complete or convincing, I could never hear the points better put—and then I felt down in my soul the clear and unmistakeable conviction to disobey all and pursue my own way. 'What have you to say then to such things?' said E., pausing in conclusion. 'Only that while I can't answer them at all, I feel more settled than ever to adhere to my own theory and exemplify it,' was my candid response. Whereupon we went and had a good dinner at the American House. And thenceforward I never wavered or was touched with qualms (as I confess I had been two or three times before)."

From this two things are very apparent; one, that Whitman is essentially poet rather than doctrinaire, though beside other optimist poets like Browning and Hugo he may seem more teacher than singer; the other, that his hostility to conventional modesty springs as directly from his personality as does his democracy. He is the arch-optimist and poet of optimism; and it is certainly meet that he have a hearing.

Far be it from the literary critic to attempt to put either optimism or pessimism on its trial; but let him for the nonce, sheltering under the wing of George Eliot, dub himself meliorist, and inquire whether Whitman's robust frankness be really possible to his generation. It may be assumed that those who care to follow the inquiry are above the narrowness of impugning his rightness of aim and general moral healthiness even though they may resist his doctrine. Once for all, the man who wrote "Leaves of Grass," and "Democratic Vistas;" who charged himself to spread far and wide

the dear love of comrades; who includes in his rules for conduct a command to "stand up for the stupid and crazy;" who gave away his superb health in tending wounded men; and who has freely received the love of comrades and common people everywhere, whatever he may have had from the cultured—this man makes for goodness and righteousness, for high thinking and noble life, if any does. Once for all, if he is to be put on trial it is because of his very simplicity and incorruptible single-heartedness; because to his undaunted courage nothing that is genuinely human is unworthy of open avowal. And yet, withal, it is to be feared that few of us can exhort him to persevere. Be it that we are so far pessimists; we cannot in cool blood turn to the ground-plan of humanity in the "Children of Adam" poems, and say it is all so brave and fair that we can sing pæans over it with Whitman. It may well be that the incapacity is but the measure of our shortcoming from a higher state yet to be attained by the race; that one day we shall be seen to have been morbid creatures, organisms unfitted to survive; and that a hygienic and serene humanity will "sing the body electric" as we do the other phenomena of nature. But no good will ever be done by affecting an enthusiasm we have not, and sincere speech in the matter is as much incumbent on us as on Whitman. The verdict of the average liberal thinker, then, is likely to be that the animal man is not a subject on which it is possible to keep up permanently an exalted feeling. Let each put the question to himself; nay, let him put it in the market place, for it can be discussed without offence on the broad ground taken up by Whitman. The problem is this: Is bodily function an inspiring theme? Does the mastication of food, the chemical action of

the stomach, chymification and chylification, the functions of heart, kidneys and liver—does any or do all move us to lyric ecstacy? Sing one, sing all; and Whitman catalogues everything, more or less, with his unhappy faculty in that direction. Perhaps after all he could best be answered by a challenge to sing with any measure of afflatus the act of dining, confessedly as necessary as any other human procedure. What he has done is to sing the appetite that associates itself with passion; and the question arises whether after all he is not deceiving himself; whether he is not really inspired by immemorial poetic association of hope and music and joy, rather than by any discovery of worthiness in appetite. Let him sing dinner if he would dispel the doubt. All of us can feel something poetic in the concept of wine; but what we think of is not so much Hochheimer; it is a something from grapes, "tasting of Flora and the country green—dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth"; an elixir flavoured with southern skies and sunlight, eternal passion, and old-world dreams which are to the race as memories of youth and spring. But who shall sing beer or whisky-straight? There is abundant and authoritative testimony to the fecundity of the States in original and characteristic beverages; but Whitman has somehow omitted them even from his numerous and exhaustive catalogues. There is surely something wrong about the theory of the beauty of appetite.

It still remains to weigh the special charge against Whitman that is based on such poems as that "To a Common Prostitute," "A Woman Waits for Me," and "Native Moments;" and of course after judgment has gone against the poet on the question of the glorification of appetite generally it is sufficiently difficult to say

anything in his defence here. Yet we may profitably pause before pronouncing summary sentence, and ask ourselves whether we have no need to obey that formidable injunction of Dr. Johnson to his biographer, "Clear your mind of cant;"—an injunction bestowed pretty much in vain, as was but natural, considering that the giver had himself fallen considerably short of the prescribed standard. How many of us, in the first place, can without prudery or puritanism or false pretences say that the spirit of Whitman's condemned poems is quite alien to us? The question here is not one of poetic method but of moral judgment. Suppose that Whitman be denied any credit for magnanimity: suppose the general answer to be that he has gone below the level of feeling of cultured men—the matter is still not settled. Emerson presumably had this part of the subject in his mind when he vehemently reproached the new poet: suppose even it be decided that Whitman is after all to be convicted of a certain occasional coarseness of feeling, some lack of desirable delicacy being held an inevitable concomitant of such a life as his, with its extensive associations with "powerful uneducated persons." There is, unhappily, some colour for such a judgment not merely in some remarks of Whitman's about the too great stress laid on manners —these need disturb nobody—but in a "Note Left Over," on Emerson, perhaps the most really regrettable thing he has written. He has spoken reverently and well of his dead friend, but in this note, evidently the outcome of a sour mood, he has gone far to unsay his previous tribute. As literary criticism it is bad. That "Emerson is not eminent as poet or artist or teacher, though valuable in all these"—that he is "best as critic or diagnoser"—is one of several literary misjudgments

of Whitman's. It is difficult to see anything but perversity in the following:—

"At times it has been doubtful to me if Emerson really knows or feels what poetry is at its highest, as in the Bible, for instance, or Homer, or Shakespeare. I see he covertly or plainly likes best superb verbal polish, or something old or odd. Waller's 'Go, lovely rose,' or Lovelace's lines 'to Lucasta'—the quaint conceits of the old French bards, and the like. Of *power* he seems to have a gentleman's admiration—but in his inmost heart the grandest attribute of God and poets is always subordinate to the octaves, conceits, polite kinks, and verbs."

This in the face of the fact that in the very essay in which Emerson alludes to Waller's "Go, lovely rose," and Lovelace's lines "to Lucasta," he lays down Whitman's own doctrine that "the test or measure of poetic genius is the power to read the poetry of affairs—to fuse the circumstances of to-day; not to use Scott's antique superstitions, or Shakespeare's, but to convert those of the nineteenth century, and of the existing nations, into universal symbols. . . American life storms about us daily, and is slow to find a tongue. . . The test of the poet is the power to take the passing day, with its news, its cares, its fears, as he shares them, and hold it up to a divine reason, till he sees it to have a purpose and beauty, and to be related to astronomy and history, and the eternal order of the world."

More jarring still is the observation that "for a philosopher, Emerson possesses a singularly dandified theory of manners," yet more, the conclusion growing out of the discussion of that point:

"The reminiscence that years ago I began like most youngsters to have a touch (though it came late, and was only on the surface) of Emerson-on-the-brain—that I read his writings reverently, and addressed him in print as 'Master,' and for a month or so thought

him as such—I retain not only with composure, but positive sfaction. I have noticed that most young people of eager minds ; through this stage of exercise."

It is fitting to say here that some of us are content to l Emerson 'Master' still, and that we think Whitman ght gracefully have done so to the end; Emerson ving prepared many a mind to appreciate, and anti-ated not a little of what is best in, his junior; besides ing many a subtle sensation the other does not stir. e note which was *not* left over is just another expres-n of Whitman's capacity for fanaticism; and here ain his fanaticism makes him transgress his own pre-ts. He has again and again predicted for his ntry an ideal civilisation; he has even denounced meanness of its present manners (see p. 18); but en Emerson, too, indicates that the actual is not ideal, champion of democracy is piqued, and will justify rtcomings because they are characteristically demo-tic.

But enough of detraction on this head. Granted t Whitman has faults to answer for in respect of icacy of feeling, it behoves us still to judge him partially; and we shall have some trouble to censure n emphatically without convicting ourselves of strange ity to others. Burns and Byron have sung all sorts amours with comparatively little reproach; Nelson eps in St. Paul's; Mr. Browning has justified pro-scuity of attachment. But that is not all. Lord nnyson has sung carnage *con amore;* and if our nunciation of Whitman is to justify itself by an appeal the higher feelings there must be some protest against glorification of all lower impulses whatever. There really no moral difference to the eye of pure reason ween the insurgence of elemental passion in "One

Hour to Madness and Joy," and any poem which sympathetically expresses the lust of slaughter. For—to make an end of this part of our study—the reader is in duty bound to make for Whitman the same allowance that he does for Tennyson, namely, that of assuming that the poet is not so much expressing himself as singing a passion which he knows to be human. If Tennyson heartily and persistently experiences the passion of battle which he has sung, he has as much cause to feel shame as Whitman can have. As to "Native Moments," we are doubtless all agreed that the impulse to riot is not one which will bear looking into, but the war spirit being on a similar basis, there is scarcely room for special protest.

Whitman has perhaps himself to thank that his public looks narrowly to the moral bearing of his poetry, and insists rigorously on making him responsible for all it contains; but if the reader will be content to take his every poem as a simple expression of emotion, one thing will speedily be established to the author's advantage, namely, that there is poetic feeling in a greater or less degree in almost all. It might, indeed, be charged against Whitman that he is at times positively carried off his feet by the afflatus—that, morals apart, he at times passes the bounds of sanity, and becomes for us a possessed energumen rather than an inspired truth-singer. This tendency to delirium we must just set against other displays of a leaning to the *banal*, and admit that the latter is only transient. It must be confessed, however, that the most difficult thing of all in judging Whitman is to estimate his purely poetic value. No body of poetry is so difficult to account for or classify on any theory as his. Like the democracy it celebrates, it refuses to

conform to old formulas. Whether we say with Johnson that poetry lies in giving an elevated account of things, or with Coleridge, that it is a matter of choice expression, or with Mr Arnold that it is a subtle heightening of phrase and idea—definitions which harmonise obviously enough—Whitman's verse will be found to demand a certain concession for its acceptance. It precipitates the critic on the old paradox which is constantly coming up in all departments of art-criticism, and which is stated in the demand that the artist shall be at once spontaneous and self-controlled, inspired and artificial. The lover of English poetry who comes to Whitman for the first time will probably, in two cases out of three—unless he happens to be familiar with Blake—be merely astonished and irritated, and these sensations some readers never live down. Perhaps the best course for the reader of poetic taste who is capable of appreciating Whitman's ideas is to turn at the first shock from the poetry to the prose. That he is almost sure to find stimulating and rich in suggestion, and when he has thus got into sympathy with the man he will find the poetry much more palatable. At first he will be disposed to insist that there is hardly any difference between the prose and the poetry; that the preface to "Leaves of Grass," cropped into clauses of systematically unequal length, might eke out "American Feuillage" with perfect propriety; that, in short, Whitman simply makes prose pass for poetry by a particular arrangement of type. Though, however, it will be found hardly possible to defend Whitman's artistic method in the long run, that particular criticism will have to be departed from. Taken all over, the verse, hopelessly unrhythmical as it so often seems, has distinctly that quality of "lilt,"

which is after all the generic difference between poetry and prose. It is the difference between walking and running—the nervous tension belonging to the dance—the definition of which as "the poetry of motion" supplies the critic with a really instructive analogy. Add that it is only in his poetry he becomes dramatic or celebrates passion pure and simple, and the distinction between his poetry and his prose is broadly established. But to allow that his verse has poetic quality is one thing; to say it is a successful poetic product is another.

Whitman, who has a decided opinion about poetic expression, would probably accept with Emerson the conception of poetry as having its form originally determined by the pulse-beat and the inhalation and exhalation of the lungs; but to all appearance he refuses to go any further. As in his thinking he takes his stand on primary facts and individual impulse, so in his verse he returns to elementary methods. It may fairly be said to bear to contemporary English poetry some such relation as does an African war-dance to the dances of Europe. The barbarian, like the civilised people in waltz and quadrille, is going through a calculated performance belonging to the domain of art, but his conformity to plan is of the slightest, and delicate precision is entirely beyond him. His excitement is too complete for sustained grace. It is not that the waltzer does not likewise undergo cerebral excitement, but that he attains a more complex form of gratification by planning and timing his motion. In a study of the dances of different ages, by the way, will be found a help to the appreciation of their poetry; the stately constraint of gavotte and minuet having no less clear an affinity to the verse of the last century

than have the dreamy languors and reckless movements in the dances of to-day to its poetry—dress in large measure exhibiting the same relation. Whitman, then, has simply reverted to a prior stage of development. The essence of modern poetry may be said to be indicated in Wordsworth's idea of emotion recollected in tranquillity and artistically expressed; while Whitman chafes at the drill, and rejects the artistic pains as belonging to the department of "polite kinks," grammar, and fine manners. And the upshot is that the world is impelled to view Whitman's aversion to graceful poetic form as it does his rejection of manners, and pronounce him a fine specimen of the barbarian. It is worth noting that Blake, much of whose verse is so curiously like Whitman's, likewise gave overt signs of strong leanings to the primitive, his partial insanity being perhaps responsible for such an emphatic exhibition as his appearance in the open air in the garb of Adam.

There is, on the other hand, a danger of being too summary in writing Whitman down a magnificent barbarian in art. A mistaken notion of his culture has been inadvertently fostered in England by Mr. W. M. Rossetti and Mr. Moncure Conway; the former rather unfortunately representing him as having used Emerson's praise to advertise "Leaves of Grass" while entirely unacquainted with Emerson's books; and the latter apparently accepting too unreservedly the poet's remark that his reading was confined mostly to Homer and the Bible. Whitman has since given sketches of his life, from which it appears that at an early age he began to read novels omnivorously; that he did much miscellaneous work in journalism; and that he picked up plenty of general culture, as a recep-

tive American can, without being systematic in his studies. In his later years, it is interesting to observe, he has read more and more; indeed he is rather suspiciously given of late to laying stress on "The Hegelian Formulas," and taking bird's-eye views of literatures, with such results as finding Shakespeare inferior to Æschylus as an exponent of the passions.

"Without being a scientist," he says in his general preface of 1876, "I have thoroughly adopted the conclusions of the great savans and experimentalists of our time, and of the last hundred years, and they have interiorly tinged the chyle of all my verse, for purposes beyond."

Furthermore, he has always loved music. Artistic conformity apart, he has been about as much in the movement of the culture of his time as was Shakespeare. In the very act, then, of diving back to the primitive, such a poet may supply us with the germs of a new artistic growth.

If such there be, they can best be got at by examining some of the finer passages in his poems. Whitmanites, when challenged to produce from his books a piece of real verse, are given with rather amusing unanimity to cite the lines, "O Captain, my Captain!" on the death of Lincoln, which are partly rhymed; but he has done better work in which there is no suggestion of imitation of accepted forms. "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn," for instance, is rhythmic, and more or less beautiful throughout. Thus it begins:—

When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourned—and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring;
Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

It does not need the half-reluctant praise conceded to Tennyson in the essay on "Poetry to-day in America" to let the reader know that Whitman has read at least portions of "Maud." The same music recurs:—

Sing on! sing on, you grey-brown bird!
Sing from the swamps, the recesses,—pour your chant from the bushes;
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

. . . . . .

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle, as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,

I fled forth to the hiding receiving night, that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars, and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest received me;
The gray-brown bird I know, received us comrades three;
And he sang what seem'd the carol of death and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars, and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held, as if by their hands, my comrades in the night;
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

The close of the Death Carol * is perhaps the most

[1] So entitled in Whitman's Centennial Edition of his poems. In Messrs. Wilson and M'Cormick's edition (Glasgow 1883), which bears as a whole the old title "Leaves of Grass," the "Burial Hymn" and "Death Carol" read as parts of one poem, under the heading "Memories of President Lincoln."

musical passage he has written, and fine music it surely is :—

Yet each I keep, and all, retrievements out of the night;
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul;
With the lustrous and drooping star; with the countenance full of woe;
With the lilac tall and its blossoms of mastering odor;
With the holders holding my hand, nearing the call of the bird.

Comrades mine, and I in the midst, and their memory ever I keep—for the dead I loved so well;
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake;
Lilac and star and bird, twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines, and the cedars dusk and dim.

It is important to notice that this delicate and beautiful work, which was published in 1870, was done after the poet had parted with his robust vigour, worn the yoke of weakness and pain, and exchanged for brooding and reading his old ways of free roaming and "inviting his soul." It is a softer pulse that writes, a more cultured brain that muses and chooses its words. If we want gracious music from Whitman it is to what he wrote after the war that we must mainly turn. Take a snatch in which he has not quite reached his latest mellowness and measure.

RECONCILIATION.

Word over all, beautiful as the sky!
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night, incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soiled world:

. . . For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin—I draw near;
I bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

To be sure, there are reversions in the later work, and anticipations in the earlier. Thus we find in "Passage to India," published in 1870, the following sentence set down in all seriousness for a verse:

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not bad-looking, able to take his own part, witty, sensitive to a slight, ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women, gambled, ate hearty, drank hearty, had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited towards the last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution, died, aged forty-one years, and that was his funeral.

In "Walt Whitman"* again, one of the first-published poems, we have such a lyric outburst as this:—

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night;
I call to the earth and sea, half-held by the night.

Press close, bare-bosom'd night! Press close, magnetic, nourishing night!
Night of south winds! night of the large, few stars!
Still, nodding night! mad, naked summer night.

Smile, O voluptuous, cool-breath'd earth,
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees;
Earth of departed sunset! earth of the mountains, misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon, just tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark, mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds, brighter and clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping, elbow'd earth! rich, apple-blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes!

Prodigal, you have given me love! Therefore I to you give love!
O unspeakable, passionate love!

* Called "Song of Myself" in the Glasgow edition. The poet has made many alterations of this kind, and has excised various passages.

But the broad development is obvious. "Walt Whitman" begins thus :—

I celebrate myself;
And what I assume you shall assume;
For every atom belonging to me, as good as belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul;
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of summer grass—

and concludes thus :—

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me—he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed—I too am untranslatable;
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me;
It flings my likeness after the rest, and true as any, on the shadow'd wilds;
It coaxes me to the vapour and the dusk.

I depart as air—I shake my white locks at the runaway sun;
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeathe myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love;
If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am, or what I mean;
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first, keep encouraged;
Missing me one place, search another;
I stop somewhere, waiting for you.

And every reader of Whitman remembers vividly the remarkable features of the early "Leaves of Grass," the grotesque phraseology, the coined mongrel words, the abrupt transitions, the reckless collocations of parts of speech, the slang, the insupportable catalogues; and withal the irresistible impressiveness of the strange

new personality, with its piercing depth and directness of speech, its superb celebration of democracy and individuality, its new song of friendship, and its unexampled confidence of inspiration. No poet is more easily divisible into periods. The Whitman of "Starting from Paumanok" and "Children of Adam" is the strong man rejoicing in his strength: the writer of "Eidólons" and the "Prayer of Columbus" is a worn old man with all his more delicate perceptions refined by pain and trouble, with all his thinking deepened, and with a ripe knowledge of death. A judgment which should deny genuine poetic value to the mass of the earlier work, with its primeval inspiration, is impossible; but there can be little question that the crucial test in poetry—the common sense of readers as to what is perfectly fit to be treasured in the memory and crooned or conned over like favourite music—is much less favourable to the first "Leaves of Grass" than to the later poems. No doubt it will all live for many a day. In the straggling footnote to the general preface of 1876, after defining "Leaves of Grass" as a type-portrait of a physically healthy personality, he makes for it the claim "not but what the brawn of LEAVES OF GRASS is, I think, thoroughly spiritualised everywhere;" which cannot in strict fairness be denied. And in a late poem of a single stanza he puts the feeling into lofty and moving song.

AFTER AN INTERVAL.

(*Nov.* 22, 1875, *midnight—Saturn and Mars in conjunction*).

After an interval, reading, here in the midnight,
With the great stars looking on—all the stars of Orion looking,
And the silent Pleiades—and the duo looking of Saturn and ruddy Mars;

Pondering, reading my own songs, after a long interval (sorrow
and death familiar now),
Ere closing the book, what pride! what joy! to find them
Standing so well the test of death and night,
And the duo of Saturn and Mars!

He had the right to say it: let that be heartily allowed by all to whom he has given high moments and noble vistas. Not soon will that body of new poetry which he has predicted come to make his look unworthy. It is his own teaching, however, that great developments are in store, and supposing we give him all the credit of a new departure, we still cannot miss detecting the crudeness of the beginnings.

The case for Whitman as an innovator might be put thus: that he embodies a movement of artistic expansion which is very discernible in the shape of Wagnerism in music, and which is *à priori* in keeping with and referable to the great advances in knowledge and in the status of mankind effected in the present century. We have outgrown the thought of the poets of eighty years ago; shall we not expand their forms? Whitman raises the question for us with sufficient definiteness in one of his notes, headed NEW POETRY.

"For the most cogent purposes of those great inland states [of the future], and for Texas and California and Oregon (and also for universal reasons and purposes, which I will not stop to particularise), in my opinion the time has arrived to essentially break down the barriers of form between Prose and Poetry. I say the latter is henceforth to win and maintain its character, regardless of rhyme, and the measurement rules of iambic, spondee, dactyl, etc., and that even if rhyme and those measurements continue to furnish the medium for inferior writers and themes (especially for persiflage and the comic, as there seems henceforward to the perfect taste, something inevitably comic in rhyme, merely in itself, and anyhow), the truest and greatest POETRY (while subtly and necessarily always

rhythmic and distinguishable easily enough), can never again, in the English language, be express'd in arbitrary and rhyming metre any more than the greatest eloquence, or the truest power and passion. . . . In my opinion, I say, while admitting that the venerable and heavenly forms of chiming versification have in their time play'd great and fitting parts—that the pensive complaint, the ballads, wars, amours, legends of Europe, etc., have, many of them, been inimitably render'd in rhyming verse—that there have been very illustrious poets whose shapes the mantle of such verse has beautifully and appropriately envelopt—and though the mantle has fallen with, perhaps, added beauty on some of our own age—it is, notwithstanding, certain to me, that the day of such conventional rhyme is ended. In America, at any rate, and as a medium of highest esthetic practical or spiritual expression, present or future, it palpably fails, and must fail, to serve. The Muse of the Prairies, and of the peaks of Colorado, dismissing the literary as well as social étiquette of over-sea feudalism and caste, joyfully enlarging, adapting itself to comprehend the size of the whole people, with the free play, emotions, pride, passions, experiences, that belong to them, body and soul—to the general globe, and all its relations in astronomy, as the savans portray them to us—to the modern, the busy nineteenth century (as grandly poetic as any, only different), with steamships, railroads, factories, electric telegraphs, cylinder presses—to the thought of the solidarity of nations, the brotherhood and sisterhood of the entire earth. To the dignity and heroism of the practical labour of farms, factories, foundries, workshops, mines, or on shipboards or on lakes and rivers—resumes that other medium of expression, more flexible, more eligible—soars to the freer, vast, diviner heaven of Prose."

One is driven to ask, after desparately grappling for the syntax, whether the coming Prose is to be such as this. The verdict on Whitman might be arrived at summarily, on his own hint, his avowed prose being distinctly faulty, as many of the foregoing extracts show. Generally vigorous, and terse in respect of its parts, it is yet often slovenly, straggling, and involved —the style of a man who has strong convictions and generally clear ideas, but who will not undergo the

drudgery of castigating his language; who, in short, lacks artistic patience. An opinion in favour of rhythmic prose by a writer who writes ordinary prose faultily, and whose own rhythmical writing is frequently harsh, may fairly be received with some suspicion. As for the depreciation of rhyme, that, too, seems largely referable to an incapacity or indisposition to take pains, but the point is one in regard to which we should be careful to avoid bigotry. Let us try to make the hypothesis that we may be listening to a new doctrine which will one day triumph, and ask what are its rational recommendations. Whitman simply pronounces rhyme off hand to be "inevitably comic," and a "medium for inferior writers and inferior themes;" a somewhat courageous declaration, considering how much fun the critics have had over "Leaves of Grass," and how often its style has been parodied. From any point of view whatever, the assertion seems on consideration to be unwarrantably sweeping. The rhythmical "prose" Whitman desires may be presumed to be substantially poetry like his own, though he seems to include all metres in his anathema of rhyme; since he speaks of a poetry which shall be easily distinguishable from common prose. But he has not paused to give a single reason as to why poetry is always "subtly and necessarily rhythmic." Emerson, in his admirable essay on "Poetry and Imagination," which Whitman appears to have read, puts rhyme on the same footing with rhythm as the gratification of a natural taste, subtly suggesting that all things become more beautiful by being reflected in water, the reflection being a rhyme to the eye; that "shadows please us as still finer rhymes;" and that "architecture gives the like pleasure by the repetition of equal parts in a row of windows, or in wings." He detects the same species

of charm in a bridal company, a funeral procession, and a row of soldiers. If we try to find reasons for Whitman, we may argue on the superiority of a natural landscape to a garden; but the answer is that we find the same degree of difference between fine and flat poetry—between "Maud," or "The Flight of the Duchess," and "The Borough," or "London"—as between the garden and the landscape. Mere dicta settle nothing. Milton also slighted rhyme; but since Milton, some of the most perfect rhymed poetry in the language has been produced; and none of us are led to reject "Lycidas" or "L'Allegro" by reason of our appreciation of "Paradise Lost." It may very readily be conceded that rhyme grows wearisome in an epic; and that Milton's tale would probably have sounded poorly enough in heroic couplets. That reflection, however, raises another proposition which it would be worth Whitman's while to ponder—and to which, indeed, his own practice in great measure squares, his long pieces being really bundles of short poems—the thesis of Poe, namely, that no poem can far exceed two hundred lines in length and remain perfect. Is it not just as probable that all long poems, blank verse or otherwise, will follow the epic, now admittedly dead, as that rhyme will be relegated to the comic papers? Is not the highest poetry necessarily an affair of brief and concentrated feeling, with expression to correspond; and can we say that we should prefer to have our favourite passages taken out of rhyme and left merely rhythmical? There is no getting over the suspicion that if Whitman had had Tennyson's art, his sense of the comicality of rhyme would never have been developed. His own early scraps of rhyming verse, which he has been compelled to reprint, show no great facility. We

may partly sum up in saying that rhyme must in future be much more artistically managed than it is in much work signed with great names; but that there is yet no conclusive reason to suppose art will not keep pace with the demands on it. To-day we find Shelley's Ode to the Skylark slatternly to a distressing degree; and even detect abject puerility in the shifts to which Mr. Browning resorts at times for a rhyme; but Whitman and all his school—if he has a school for his artistic theory—may be challenged to find a single rhyme in, say, Tennyson's stanza:

> "Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so cruelly meek?

that will ring false beside even the closing stanza of the "Death Carol," before quoted; and if they will put the couplet

> "Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world,"

(where the poet has ventured on a rhyme that is perilously hackneyed), beside any passage from "Beat, Beat Drums," or any similar sentiment from Whitman, they may get some idea of what rhyme can do—some conception of the truth of Hugo's remark, endorsed by Emerson, that "an idea steeped in verse becomes suddenly more incisive and more brilliant; the iron becomes steel." But Whitman's allegation that Tennyson has not written a single democratic line suggests that he has omitted to read some of the most perfect of modern rhymed poetry.

To perverse sayings about the inferiority of rhyme, it can promptly be retorted that rhythm has nothing better to say for itself. Every one of us must sometimes, in a ratiocinating mood, have felt wonder at

the act of singing; and the only conclusion possible is that that act and sustained rhythm and rhyme, and dancing, ay, and laughter, are the outcome of a kind of "fine madness," to make an end of which is to take the moonlight out of life. It is scarcely worth any one's while to insist on the special value of prose in the days of Ruskin, and Carlyle, and George Eliot. Coleridge said practically everything on that head in his fragment on the wonderfulness of prose, in which he pictures the charmed surprise of those who, accustomed only to the short recurring cadence of primitive verse, first heard the evolving roll of an orator's sentence. Carlyle, bantering a friend about the passion for putting the accusative before the verb, may be as easily answered as Whitman by a *tu quoque*, with the addition that inversion is no more absolutely necessary in verse than in prose. In fine, most of us will elect to say with Emerson: "I know what you say of mediæval barbarism and sleigh-bell rhyme, but we have not done with music, no, nor with rhyme, nor must console ourselves with prose poets so long as boys whistle and girls sing. Let poetry pass, if it will, into music and rhyme. That is the form which itself puts on." We cling to our verse as we cling to our humour, which also fails to find favour with Whitman.

To that somewhat crude argument that the songs of a wide country require, as it were, long lines, there are many answers, if any one cares to carry the discussion further. Whitman has himself indicated one answer in his general preface:

"Human thought, poetry or melody, must leave dim escapes and outlets—must possess a certain fluid, ærial character; akin to space tself, obscure to those of little or no imagination, but indispensable

to the highest purposes. Poetic style, when addressed to the soul, is less definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista, music, half-tints, and even less than half-tints. True, it may be architecture; but again it may be the forest wild-wood, or the best effects thereof, at twilight, the waving oaks and cedars in the wind, and the impalpable odor."

Now this is a very clear expression of a main truth about modern poetry. It is becoming more and more rich in complexities, and it runs more and more to concise treatment; it does not demand great frames and canvases; it seeks subtle condensations and essences, Pisgah-sights, mood-visions, raptures, sighs, and elusive ideas. Does this mean garrulity, and sentences that run on anyhow? The very reverse. No need to reproach Whitman with his cataloguing; even he must long ere this have seen that that was a cheap art method—vivid and stimulating though one or two of his panoramas be. "La concision imagée," says some one, "voilà le style." And rhyme not only lends itself to but demands concision. It is, in fact, a complexity added to rhythm, and therefore, it may be argued, a more finished expression of complex feeling. Our poets will in future assuredly sing less, because all their work must be a more complex product. They too must become specialists. Whitman has himself warned them, in perverse phrase enough:

To oratists—to male or female,
Vocalism, measure, concentration, determination, and the divine power to use words.
Are you full-lunged and limber-lipped from long trial? from vigorous practice, from physique?
Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they?
Come duly to the divine power to use words?

For only at last, after many years . . . . it is just possible there comes to a man, a woman, the divine power to use words.

There was surely some self-judgment in the thought, carelessly worded as the demand for art in speech happens to be

On the other hand, while resisting the repudiation of the tried forms as outworn, the unbigoted critic must confess that the movement of expansion promises to do a service not readily to be calculated; and that though the rhymers may hold their own, they must acknowledge the status of singers who can sound the large music of Whitman's best work. He is, indeed, not alone in his departure from the accepted forms; Clough and Arnold, to mention no others, having cast about them—certainly much less boldly—for a more elastic medium than either rhyme or the orthodox blank verse, with notable results. Contemporaneously, Browning and Tennyson have been roaming free in rhyming verse-forms; the former, following Hugo, delighting in intricacies and difficulties; the latter, though much the more careful artist, choosing simpler and looser metres. It is yet too soon to attempt to estimate the respective influence of these various experiments, but their tendency is obvious; and in regard to Whitman's product in particular it is warrantable to say that there is a quality of breadth and fulness in some of it which moves the sensibilities as potently as do its teachings, and which is equally premonitory of coming developments. Precedent and training interfere grievously with our power to appreciate new notes and styles in song; but the sensation Whitman has produced among responsive readers is, on the whole, unequivocal.

Perhaps a more important question than the form of the poetry of the future is that as to the poets' themes and the value that will be set on their work;

but in that direction the inquiry threatens to become endless, swinging round again to the great vista of democracy. It is noteworthy that Whitman gives contradictory opinions on the subject of the themes of the future, though he is quite clear as to the loftiness of the poetic status in the times to be. His predominant conception is that the poets will have an assigned function in a sort of Comtist scheme of things, co-operating with "gangs of prophets and Kosmos," in the Whitman terminology; and interpreting gods and Eidólons" "to the modern, to Democracy;" but he concedes in one place that "after the rest is satiated, all interest culminates in the field of persons, and never flags there;" which is partial amends for fanatical handling of Shakespeare. Pessimism would whisper that "the rest is satiated" very soon for most people, and that the appetite of the Democracy for the strong wine of the ideal is sadly small beside Whitman's. But not in taking leave of Walt Whitman should pessimism make itself heard. He stands there in his stricken old age, contemplating with serene, nay, with still glowing eyes, the vast growth of his beloved nation, refusing to despair over its diseases, looking stedfastly to a golden age beyond; the most significant living figure in American literature. The pessimists of Europe, looking with weary eyes across the melancholy main, find in him an antagonist rather harder to dispose of than Victor Hugo. Not even in confessing that his most characteristic and confident poems in the major key were the expression of an exuberant health, will he admit that he saw things otherwise than as they are. A strenuous persistence has dictated one of his latest pieces, striking both in its avowals and its rebound:—

Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats,
Ah you foes that in conflict have overcome me,
(For what is my life or any man's life but a conflict with foes, the old, the incessant war?)
You degradations, you tussle with passions and appetites,
You smarts from dissatisfied friendships, (ah wounds the sharpest of all!)
You toil of painful and choked articulations, you meannesses,
You shallow-tongued talks at tables, my tongue the shallowest of any;)
You broken resolutions, you racking angers, you smothered ennuis!
Ah think not you finally triumph, my real self has yet to come forth,
It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies beneath me,
It shall yet stand up the soldier of ultimate victory.

There is a deep, quiet pathos about some aspects of his life; but no dirge comes from him.

"I occupy myself," he says in his preface of 1875, writing on his fifty-sixth birthday, "arranging these pages for publication, still envelopt in thoughts of the death two years since of my dear mother, the most perfect and magnetic character, the rarest combination of practical, moral, and spiritual, and the least selfish, of all and any I have ever known—and by me O so much the most deeply loved . . . and also under the physical affliction of a tedious attack of paralysis, obstinately lingering and keeping its hold upon me, and quite suspending all bodily activity and comfort. . . . I see now, much clearer than ever—perhaps these experiences were needed to shew—how much my former poems, the bulk of them, are indeed the expression of health and strength, and sanest, joyfullest life."

There is no bitterness for him in the memory. He holds, it is true, to the belief in a further life; but he had before sung a carol to death with as bold a note as he had sounded for love and joy; and his religious creed is but the expression of the intensity of his vitality, not a superstition at which he clutches for sustenance. Cold looks and words from his country-

men cannot chill him while his heart beats. The preface to "Leaves of Grass" concluded thus:

> "The soul of the largest, and wealthiest, and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it."

In the "Collect" the last four sentences are quietly, pathetically, deleted. The rebuff of time is mutely endured—and the message presented still without complaint. So when history callously falsifies his confident prediction that "when the hundredth year of this Union arrives, there will be some Forty to Fifty great States, among them Canada and Cuba," he tranquilly substitutes "Long, long ere the Second Centennial." No defeats can break down his faith. Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale its manifold expression. Looking round on contemporary poetry, English and French, one is led to suspect that much of it will go the way of last generation's theology, and that poets who have spun their philosophies and gospels into vast webs of verse, "laying great bases for eternity," will be found in a century or so to have spent much labour in vain. But the poetry of Whitman, ill-smelted as so much of it is, cataloquial as is so much of his transcription from life, and lacking as his song so often is in music, somehow does not seem thus marked for doom even in respect of his didacticism. And the reason would seem to be not merely that his message is the intense expression of his deepest passion, but that the passion is the very flower of the life of the race thus far, and carries in it the seeds of things to come. He cannot soon be left behind—he has gone so far before.

JOHN ROBERTSON.

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